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Synopses of Important Articles.

DOES THE BIBLE CONTAIN SCIENTIFIC ERRORS? By Prof. Chas. W. Shields, in *The Century*, Nov., 1892.

Can the Bible yield us any real knowledge within the domain of the various sciences? Three elements, commonly spoken of now in connection with the Scriptures, do not impair their scientific integrity or philosophical value, and so are not to be regarded as scientific errors, namely, literary imperfections, historiographical defects, and traditional glosses, all of which may be admitted as present. But, aside from these, the Scriptures, as judged by their own claims, if accounted inerrant at all, must be so accounted as to their whole revealed content, whatever it be and wherever found, whether in the region of the natural sciences or in that of ethics and theology. It is seldom remarked that both the physical and the spiritual teaching of the Bible are alike given in a non-scientific form. Often it is said—and said truly enough—that the Bible does not teach astronomy or physics as a science. But neither does it teach theology or ethics as a science. If it be urged that we have left far behind us the contemporary astronomy of the Old Testament, how shall we defend its contemporary theology, with its manlike deity so often depicted as a monster of anger, jealousy and cruelty, its polygamous patriarchs and proslavery apostles. If we are warned against a few devout scientists who are endeavoring to harmonize their geology with the Mosaic cosmogony, is there to be no warning for this scandal of great churches and denominations at the present moment adjusting their metaphysics to the Pauline divinity? The physical and the spiritual teaching alike have a permanent and universal import, as well as local and temporary reference. It is true that the physical sciences are, in the main, bodies of empirical knowledge; but it is not true that they can find no metaphysical ground and material in the biblical revelations concerning physical facts. The physical portion of revelation, small though it seems to be, is of the greatest benefit to science, philosophy and general culture. The Bible gives, not the empirical part of any physical science, but its metaphysical complement, the divine ideas expressed in those phenomena, and the divine causes of those laws. The inspired Bible is a radiant source of divine knowledge, chiefly within the psychical, but also within the physical, sciences.

It does not appear from this discussion what contribution is made by Scripture revelation to the physical sciences, for the knowledge given of them is noumenal, not phenomenal, hence metaphysical, not physical. This then comes back to the com-

mon conception that the revelation of the Bible concerns spiritual things, those of which a knowledge is necessary for man's highest welfare. C. W. V.

THE QUESTION OF SYCHAR.* The identification of Sychar is important, because the difficulties connected with it have been made the ground for denying that the author of the Fourth Gospel was familiar with the geography of Palestine. These difficulties are three: 1. Sychar is not known to us as a city of Samaria. But the author of the Fourth Gospel is familiar with the Old Testament passages relating to the connection of Jacob with Shechem. It is highly improbable, then, that he would use another than the Old Testament name for such a place without accurate information. He may have known Sychar either as another name for Shechem, or as the name of another place near Shechem. Of the first, there is absolutely no proof. For the second, there is the evidence of the continued name of the place. This evidence is first found in the beginning of the fourth century, when Sychar is mentioned twice. The next evidence is from mediæval travelers, in 1106, 1130, 1160-70. A traveler in 1283 is quoted as authority for a town Istar, north of Jacob's well. At the present time a few ruins, a little over half a mile north of the well, are called 'Askar. Can this 'Askar be derived from Sychar through 'Ischar? Robinson says it cannot, but analogy with other place-names of Palestine would seem to indicate that it could be. Can the name be one that has been forced on it by pilgrims? Hardly, for from the fourth century on it was agreed that Shechem and Sychar were the same, yet meanwhile this name has existed as a native name. 2. Would a woman come for water from 'Askar to Jacob's well? There is a copious fountain in 'Askar and a stream, which she must have crossed, large enough to turn a mill, flowing only a few rods from the well. But from wherever the woman came, she must have passed by these or other sources of water. The real difficulty is why the well was ever dug there at all. 3. It is said that expositions which assume the accuracy of the narrative involve the error of assuming that the road to Galilee goes north from the forks at the well, instead of east, past Shechem. Now, it is true that the present road to Galilee does take this eastern route, but there is a track of easy grade sometimes taken yet, by which one may pass directly north, leaving Shechem on the west. This third point, however, is a small matter, and does not affect the narrative in John.

A very clear article. Its position, while differing from that of Robinson, agrees with the conclusions of the Palestine Exploration Society's survey. It may certainly be regarded as a very probable identification. I. F. W.

THE RÔLE OF THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS IN MODERN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.†—The history of Religions as a science dates from the present

* By Prof. George Adam Smith, in *The Expositor*, December 1892, p. 464-472.

† By Jean Réville, in *The New World*, Sept. 1892, pp. 503-519.

century. Its existence was made possible (1) by the collection of facts on the various religions made accessible by philology and archæology, contributed by missionaries and travelers and students of folk-lore; (2) by a disposition to study these facts seriously, a disposition increasingly encouraged by the facts themselves, in the face of theological bigotry and anti-religious free-thinking; (3) by the application to these facts of a critical scientific method, which stands apart from the partisan, the apologetic or the doctrinaire method. Thus beginning, the science has been making its way slowly in universities and cultivated circles, through periodicals and printed books, by libraries and museums. The question arises, Where and how introduce the science of religions into the curriculum of public instruction? or, How may the facts of this science influence education? It should not be taught in primary or secondary schools, both because the curriculum there is already too full, the subject too complicated and the risk of arousing religious prejudices too great. The university is the place for direct instruction on this subject, where the teacher of the lower schools may be trained by this study in a spiritual and moral temper which he may transmit to his pupils. The clergy must study it, first as theologians, second as leaders of men. Theology can only remain scientific by embracing in its sphere of accepted truth the facts of religion outside of Christianity and Judaism. Christianity and Judaism themselves cannot be understood without a knowledge of other related religions. Theology must collect all the religious facts possible, exclude none by *a priori* judgments, test all, classify, compare them. Otherwise the laws of man's religious life cannot be ascertained, and theology ceases to be scientific. But the science of religion itself needs religious men to study and teach it, in order to be fairly appreciated. Again, the minister, as a leader of men in religious life, needs to know this science, since it acquaints him with the religious life and character of humanity in its elements and its largest extent: *e. g.*, (a) it teaches him the universality of religion and its profoundly human character, the permanent needs and religious aspirations of the human soul; (b) it teaches him to disengage the essential characteristics, the general elements of all religion which are most important to cultivate in believers, as the consciousness of dependence upon a superior power, the need of pardon, the intuition of life after death; (c) it teaches him toleration, without cultivating indifference as to Christian belief and life. To recognize Christian elements in other religions is not denying Christianity or betraying the Gospel; it is affirming the universality of Christian truth, or, to speak more exactly, the fundamental identity of "this religion of humanity of which the Gospel of Christ is for us the highest expression"; (d) it emphasizes Christian universalism, in which thought is a great power on the side of the religious sentiment of modern times—at all times God has called and everywhere man has responded according to his degree of civilization and his differing aptitudes. Thus is educed the fundamental truth of religion in which all unite, the eternal and permanent religion of humanity.

The spirit of this article is earnest and religious. Its emphasis upon the need for the study of the science of religion by theologians and ministers is thoroughly sound and commendable. Its insistence upon a scientific critical method, without apologetic or philosophical presumptions, is just. The claims made for this science as a distinctively educative force in current religious life seem to us, however, somewhat overstated. One agrees willingly that such a study should not lead to indifferentism, as many fear, for breadth does not necessarily imply shallowness. But a composite religion as is here sketched out does not excite our highest interest. It is an excellent intellectual exercise to work out such a religion from the faiths of the world; it teaches toleration and possibly helps to subdue pride, but it remains an intellectual achievement after all, and the result does not fire the soul with an emotion of reverence and faith. Christianity, if it ever does pass away, will only yield—we say it reverently—to a greater than Jesus Christ, not to “the eternal and permanent religion of humanity,” which is the substratum of the world’s religions. Just here is the defect of this excellent article. It says the right word for the intellectual effects of a study of religions, says it earnestly and impressively, but forgets that the power of the religious life is not mind or heart but *personality*. G. S. G.

THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY. By Otto Pfeleiderer in *The New World*. September, 1892. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

The religious personality of Jesus is the most important source for perceiving the essence of Christianity, and the most characteristic feature of his personality was his consciousness of divine Sonship. Not in the exclusive, peculiar, unique sense set forth in the doctrine of the Trinity and the Christ, which cannot be realized by us. This may be taken as the historical presupposition of Christianity, but not as its universal essence. The latter consists rather in a kind of consciousness of God common to all men, that which led Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels to refer to God as *his* Father, in no other sense than he taught us to pray, “*Our* Father in heaven,” and in the sense in which Paul speaks of divine Sonship (Gal. iii. 26, Rom. viii. 29). This new relation to God is not one of fear like the Jewish-Gentile piety, but of childlike love, which surrenders the whole man, the undivided pure heart, to the holy will of the Father. Herein lies the essential difference of the Christian conception of God from the Gentile and the Jewish. The God of Christianity is neither on the one hand a personified power of nature or a refined human nature, nor on the other hand, merely an opposite will over against man as lord and judge. He is self-communicating holy love, which does not indeed set aside the ethical constitution of the world, but which leaves men to perceive and prove the better way (Rom. xii. 2); and not only so, but leads them by chastening, if necessary, to become partakers of his holiness (Heb. xii. 10). Herein arises a most important difference between the Law, which was foreign to man and which could merely judge and slay without giving life, and this holy love, which becomes in the heart of man himself the power of the Holy Ghost (2 Cor. iii. 6), the new and free principle of life (Rom. viii. 2), that betrays its divine origin in the begetting of Godly sentiments (Rom. xii. 2). The power of sin is overcome. In this overcoming of sin is included its forgive-

ness. This forgiving is certainly a gracious gift of divine love; yet it is holy love, which does not simply overlook sin and exempt the sinner from the punishment of his guilt—as it might seem—but it effaces guilt itself by breaking and overcoming the natural impulse to sin through the higher power of the holy impulse of the Spirit (Rom. viii. 2). This is the redeeming and reconciling revelation of the essence of God as love, which is one with holy justice.

From this idea of divine Sonship springs the Christian conception of the real dignity of all men. While the Bible fully recognizes this, it does not speak of it so much as of man's universal sinfulness, because it knows that sin is a power that has root in the inmost recesses of human nature and rules over the whole human race. In his battle against this power, the individual is never able to gain the victory unless aided by the redeeming and educating power of the divine Spirit, in the community of the kingdom of God. On the other hand, the Bible recognizes the universal ability of all men to be redeemed, which is based on the indestructible essence of the divine image in every man. This redemption, however, in the sense of the Gospels, is not a miraculous event occurring once, and brought about outside of humanity by a superhuman mediator between the Godhead and humanity; it is an inner process within the heart of man which always and forever repeats itself when the fettered and diseased powers of the soul are freed and healed, when the image of God and the child of God, that slumbers in everyone, are awakened to life, reality and power. Such a force proceeds in every community from those who are relatively sound and strong, and through them affects others. The ideal, the ethical-religious *truth*, is the freeing and elevating power (John viii. 32); the individual is such only in so far as he is a type and voice of the idea.

The special merit of Jesus Christ, compared with other ethical and religious geniuses, consists in this, that at a time when the ancient world was facing spiritual bankruptcy, he perceived this new and exalted ideal of man—divine Sonship. He represented it in his life and teaching, and finally surrendered his life for its realization in a new kingdom of God—a universal community founded on the divine ideal of man as the child of God.

To this ideal of man as potentially the child of God, corresponds also the Christian conception of the world, which finds its purpose in the spiritual-ethical kingdom of God. It becomes an orderly arrangement of means for the purposes of the spirit, and not the plaything of a divine, despotic will, or the arena of fantastic actions of omnipotence, the supernatural miracles of which would supplant real nature by an imaginary super-nature that is unnatural.

The above synopsis represents only a part of Professor Pfeleiderer's profound and noteworthy discussion of fundamental principles. The article is significant as an indication of the tendency of scientific thought in its interpretation of the teachings of Scripture. Professor Pfeleiderer's position is open to many criticisms. From a purely exegetical point of view, we are constrained to differ with him at the outset, since the

New Testament nowhere explicitly, and only rarely by inference, permits us to speak of a universal sonship of humanity. In his consciousness of God, Jesus never includes himself in the same category with the disciples. He does not say, "I ascend unto our Father, and our God," but, "unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." The model prayer was dictated for the use of the disciples only. It was not a prayer in which he could unite. The article, moreover, seems to eliminate every supernatural element from God's relation to humanity and to the world. P. A. N.